

I agree in part with the FCC's proposal for dropping the Morse Code requirement for obtaining a General Class license in the Amateur Radio Service; however, I strongly encourage the Commission to retain the 5 wpm proficiency exam for the Extra Class license.

Morse Code (CW) is the essence of Amateur Radio, and contrary to popular belief, its demise has been grossly exaggerated. Many Amateurs operate CW almost exclusively, and tuning to the lower segments of most of the HF bands when they are open reveals a great deal of CW activity.

Dropping the code requirement for the General Class will give Technician Class licensees who have failed to previously upgrade their license class because of the code requirement an opportunity to experience the excitement of the HF bands and to be of even greater service to their communities in times of emergencies. However, the Extra Class license should be reserved for those Amateurs who have demonstrated the skill and dedication to be the best they can be.

To drop the code requirement entirely will trivialize the accomplishments and rich history of the pioneers of the Amateur Radio Service. Retaining the code requirement for the Extra Class license will help in some measure to preserve a skill and form of communication unlike any other mode, including the other digital modes with which CW is often categorically grouped. No other form of communication mode can also be sent using something as simple as a flashlight across a void of darkness or simply by tapping on a water pipe in a collapse building. This is a skill that must not be lost.

Respectfully submitted,

James L. Mason, W4RCX
Owensboro, Kentucky